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Security Information

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29 January 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: DCI Briefing of National Security Council on 29 January 1953

1. Item 1 of the first meeting of the National Security Council, under the Chairmanship of President Eisenhower, was a briefing of the world situation by the Director of Central Intelligence.

2. General Smith's briefing was presented in three phases: a brief introduction, the Soviet Atomic Energy Program, and an estimate of The World Situation Through 1954 (REF: The National Intelligence Digest, Section I).

3. In his introduction, DCI approached his subject by saying that in the time allotted, he was entering upon an ambitious undertaking by attempting to give a round-up of the world situation; therefore, he had decided to give to the new national policy-making body a short survey of what the heads of the United States intelligence agencies, sitting-in committee, had given as their best estimate — and in some cases best guesses — of what might be expected in the over-all world situation within the next two years.

4. He introduced the second phase of his briefing by saying that he would like to be quite frank and state that he had often heard from these heads of intelligence that in many cases the result that we had gained from intelligence was not being properly used by the heads of our government. As an example, he mentioned former President Truman's statement to the press on 26 January 1953, in which it was intimated that there had been no actual proof of a Soviet atomic explosion. DCI stated that on five separate occasions he had delivered the best considered estimate, gained from many expensive sources, to President Truman. He then gave a brief survey of the Soviet atomic energy development, clearly differentiating what we knew and what we had estimated about that program.

5. In his third phase, DCI dealt primarily with briefs, or in some cases, verbatim selected paragraphs, as contained in the Estimate of the World Situation Through 1954 (National Intelligence Digest, Section I). In addition, he either ad libbed or quoted from a few of the cards which had been prepared for the briefing by OCI.

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6. Immediately after DCI had finished (time: 43 minutes) the President asked if there was anything in this that would keep us from giving it to the Foreign Committees of both Houses of Congress. The President said that it was an excellent run-down of the world situation and that he thought that it would do a great deal of good if we could give it to these Committees. As an after thought, the President stated that, judging from the manner in which it was presented, an article could be written from it.

7. General Smith stated that there was nothing in the briefing that could not be given to the Committees, and as a matter of fact, he knew when he gave it that most people in the room had read it already in one form or another.

8. At this point, Secretary Wilson remarked that the President had mentioned "an article" and inferred that he would be against sending a written report to the congressional members — to which the President immediately responded that he did not mean to have "an article" written and sent to them, but that it was in such good form that one could be written. He further clarified his statement by saying that it could be "squashed down" and given to the Joint Foreign Committees in an oral form when he meets with the Committees sometime next week. General Bradley stated that he did not think the Atomic Energy material should be included — to which all agreed.

9. Referring to General Smith's briefing, Mr. Stasson remarked that he did not think that the remarks of our aiding the Italian elections should go in either — which was also agreed upon. At this point, the President asked General Smith just how much of "things like this" had Congressman been given. General Smith replied practically none. → (obviously referring to the whole of Gen. Smith's briefing ms)

10. The President stated that he could not help but remember that General Smith had emphasized that one of the Communist aims was to split the West, and in his (the President's) opinion, this was not a question of bringing disagreement between the US and Mexico but that by neglecting to give selected members of Congress what we could we were promoting the same danger within our own government. He said that one reason why the Executive Department approached matters like this differently was because we had information like this to operate on.

11. The President then turned and told General Bradley that it would also be a good idea for him to give a short briefing on Korea. (It was not clear to me whether the President meant just for this special briefing to Congressman or whether the President was directing General Bradley to do this each week at each NSC meeting. This point might have been clarified later in the meeting — which I did not attend.

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12. A Presidential assistant asked the President if the President was referring "to the meeting on 6 February" set for the briefing of the Foreign Committees. The President said that it was the next meeting, when he was going to Congress. (This too perhaps was clarified before the meeting adjourned) Someone asked the President whether he desired that this briefing be given before a bipartisan group, to which he replied he had told the leaders of Congress that he would leave such matters entirely up to them but left the impression that he personally did not see a thing wrong by making it a bipartisan group.

13. As an after thought the President, turning to DCI, said there was one other thing which "you people" must do, and that is to underscore and emphasize anything that you think "we here really should know."

14. Secretary Dulles stated that when this was given to Congress he thought it would be beneficial to have a map of Latin America.

15. I left the meeting at this point, when the President called for the next item on the agenda.

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